



ALZHEIMER'S FOUNDATION OF AMERICA

Our mission is "to provide optimal care and services to individuals confronting dementia, and to their caregivers and families—through member organizations dedicated to improving quality of life."

June 9, 2009

The Honorable Mark R. Warner
United States Senate
459A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Warner:

The Alzheimer's Foundation of America (AFA) is pleased to endorse the Senior Navigation and Planning Act of 2009. On behalf of AFA and its members, thank you for your leadership in introducing this important legislation.

AFA was formed in February 2002 "to provide optimal care and services to individuals confronting dementia, and to their caregivers and families—through member organizations dedicated to improving quality of life." Today, the Alzheimer's Foundation of America's membership consists of more than 1,200 member organizations that provide hands-on programs and services from coast to coast, including grassroots nonprofit organizations, healthcare facilities, government agencies, public safety departments, and long-term care communities.

Dignity, respect, and quality of life are the treatment goals for individuals in the end stage of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias; as well as support, training and respite for family caregivers. **The Senior Navigation and Planning Act would greatly help those with dementia and their families by establishing a new transitional care benefit through hospice for Medicare and/or Medicaid beneficiaries with a life expectancy of 18 months or less.** Valuable services provided under this new benefit would include: palliative care consultation services; care planning services; counseling of individual and family members; discussions regarding the availability of supportive services including information on advanced directives and other end-of-life planning tools; encouragement of patient-centered care; family conference services; respite services up to 16 hours per month; and caregiver training provided at the caregivers' home focused on providing effective personal and technical care.

For the millions of Americans with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia, advance directive planning services are essential. **To address this challenge, the Senior Navigation and Planning Act would create a national awareness campaign of advance directive planning.** It would also establish a toll-free telephone line and clearinghouse that the public and health care professionals may access to find out about state-specific information regarding advance directives and end-of-life planning decisions.

This legislation will allow eligible beneficiaries and their family caregivers to receive the information they need about advance directive and other end-of-life planning tools directly from their physicians. In

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addition, hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, home health agencies, and hospice programs will be required to provide the opportunity to discuss the general course of treatment expected, the likely impact on the length of life and function, and the procedures they should use to secure help if an unexpected situation arises. Such services will not only help improve quality of life, but will also help to reduce the stigma and fear of facing end-of-life issues in general.

The Senior Navigation and Planning Act would further protect the rights of individuals by requiring providers to honor written medical orders as a condition of payment. The bill would also provide incentives for hospice and palliative care accreditation and certification by providing bonus payments for those facilities with programs in place and a payment cut for facilities that do not have an accredited palliative program in place by 2020.

Beneficiaries with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias place heavy demands on the health care system. Because of the unique nature of their disease, individuals with cognitive impairment must rely on family caregivers and others to identify and obtain the right mix of services and supports to maintain their health and to live in the community as long as possible. **This legislation would take the much-needed step of creating an Office of Medicare/Medicaid Integration to align program policies.** The Office would simplify dual eligible access to Medicare and Medicaid program benefits and services; improve care continuity and ensure safe and effective care transitions; eliminate cost shifting between programs and among related care providers; eliminate regulatory conflicts; and improve total cost and quality.

Faith-based organizations often play a key role in end-of-life decision-making and planning for those with terminal illnesses. The Senior Navigation and Planning Act would empower the Secretary to create web-based materials as well as to establish end-of-life home-based service, training and education grants specifically for faith-based organizations. For individuals with end stage Alzheimer's disease and related dementias and their family caregivers in particular, faith-based services, training and support can make a world of difference in an otherwise isolating situation.

AFA is the face of care for individuals and their families who are affected by Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. **We are proud to support the Senior Navigation and Planning Act and we look forward to working with you to advance this important legislation.** If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me, or have your staff contact Sue Peschin, AFA vice president of public policy, at (202) 466-0590.

Sincerely,



Eric J. Hall
President and Chief Executive Officer